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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to determine the availability of internship opportunities for fashion design students at Harper College and to measure the value of Harper design graduates to their employers. A sample of 279 manufacturers, contacts, and retail stores employing fashion designers were identified in the Chicago metropolitan area and after two mailings of a survey instrument, a 14% response was obtained. Of the 40 firms responding, 22 indicated that they would definitely be interested in using at least one intern, and 12 others indicated they might be interested. Respondents seemed to favor having interns work part-time for about 16 hours per week. The main training opportunities for interns were in sales, merchandising, stock work, fashion coordinating, and display. A total of 29 firms indicated there would be possible employment opportunities for the interns immediately after graduation. Most job opportunities centered around management and sales. At some time, 17 firms had employed Harper graduates; eight reported definite plans to continue to do so. Strengths revealed in Harper training included display, pattern making, and selling; weaknesses noted were merchandising and promotion, design for mass media, and consumer relations. The results of the survey are detailed, and the survey instrument is appended. (Author/MB)

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SURVEY OF FASHION DESIGN EMPLOYERS

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WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE
Volume IX, No. 16
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ABSTRACT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY IS TO DETERMINE THE AVAILABILITY OF INTERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR FASHION DESIGN STUDENTS AND TO MEASURE THE VALUE OF HARPER GRADUATES TO THEIR EMPLOYERS. A SAMPLE OF 279 MANUFACTURERS, CONTACTS, PRODUCTS AND RETAIL STORES EMPLOYING FASHION DESIGNERS WERE IDENTIFIED IN THE CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA AND AFTER TWO MAILINGS OF A SURVEY INSTRUMENT, A 14 PERCENT RESPONSE WAS OBTAINED.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY SHOWED THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE A GOOD SUPPLY OF INTERNSHIPS AVAILABLE AS 22 FIRMS ARE DEFINITELY INTERESTED AND 12 MORE FIRMS MIGHT BE INTERESTED. MOST OF THE DEMAND FOR INTERNS SEEMS TO FAVOR PART-TIME WORK FOR ABOUT 16 HOURS PER WEEK. THE MAIN TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNS SEEM TO BE SALES, MERCHANDISING, STOCK WORK, FASHION COORDINATORS AND DISPLAY.

INTERNS WOULD ALSO HAVE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME EMPLOYED UPON GRADUATION AS 29 FIRMS INDICATED THERE WOULD BE SUCH A POSSIBILITY. MOST OF THE JOB OPPORTUNITIES WHICH WOULD BE AVAILABLE CENTER AROUND MANAGING, PERFORMING A VARIETY OF TASKS AND SELLING.

THOSE FIRMS WHO HAVE HIRED HARPER GRADUATES IN THE PAST SEEMED TO HAVE HAD GOOD EXPERIENCES AS MOST PLAN TO CONTINUE TO HIRE HARPER GRADUATES IN THE FUTURE. THESE FIRMS DO LIST WHAT THEY FEEL ARE THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PROGRAM AND WHAT COURSES THEY WOULD RECOMMEND ARE BEST SUITED FOR EMPLOYMENT WITH THEM.

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Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to determine the availability of internship opportunities for Fashion Design students and to measure the value of Harper Graduates to their employers. The study was requested by Cecilia Aurand of the Fashion Design program.

Population Surveyed

The Fashion Design program identified manufacturers, contacts and products in the Chicago metropolitan area and the Office of Planning and Research identified retail stores in the north and northwest suburbs who would hire fashion designers. All together 279 such firms were surveyed and after follow-up procedures were followed, 40 firms responded for a return rate of 14.3 percent. This is a standard response rate for business surveys. Even though this is not a representative sample, a conservative estimate can be made of the interest in the intern program by just using the actual numbers of firms who respond positively.

These firms who responded have hired 34 Harper graduates at some time in their history. A study completed earlier this year identified 125 persons who have graduated from Harper's Fashion Design program since its inception. Thus these respondent firms represent 27.2 percent of the total number of graduates from the Fashion Design program.

Method

The Fashion Design Commerical Survey instrument, shown in the appendix, was constructed by Cecilia Aurand with some modifications made by the Office of Planning and Research. Each of the firms identified in the target population were mailed this instrument. Many of these mailings were made to a specific individual. After three weeks, a second mailing was sent out to the remaining non-respondents. After an appropriate length of time, the survey was closed out.

Discussion of Results

There seems to be a good supply of internships available. Some 22 firms indicated they definitely were interested in using at least one student as an intern and another 12 firms indicated they might be interested, depending on further contact or information provided.

Considering only those firms who voiced a possible interest in using an intern, seven indicated they would prefer them to work full-time for about a period of 8 weeks. Another 17 firms said they would like their interns to work part-time averaging 16 hours per week. The other two firms had no preference.

Examining the types of training which would be available for interns, sales offered the most opportunities (31 firms), followed by merchandising (26 firms), stock work (26 firms), fashion coordination (18 firms), and display (18 firms). A number of other types of training opportunities were also offered by a few firms. Almost all the interns would work directly for the manager or the owner at least part of the time and would be evaluated by this person. Only in three instances would the intern work only for a specialist.

Not only are there ample opportunities for interships, but in most cases the intern would have an immediate employment opportunity upon graduation. A total of 29 firms say there is a possible employment opportunity available for the intern immediately after graduation. Most of these job opportunities involve managing (10 firms), while some specify a variety of tasks would be required (6 firms), and others are sales jobs (4 firms). Several other specific skill jobs would also be available.

A number of the respondent firms have had experiences with Harper students in the past. Some 17 firms report they have had Harper students working for them at one time while 12 firms say they have hired 34 Harper graduates at some point in their history. Moreover, seven firms indicate they now employ 15 Harper graduates and that 11 have been promoted in thier jobs. Eight of these firms report they definitely plan to employ Harper graduates in the future while two other firms indicate they plan no growth and thus they would need no more Fashion Design graduates. These firms, which employ Harper graduates, were asked to judge the strengths and weaknesses of the graduates' training and educational background. Some of the strengths listed were display, pattern making and selling. The weaknesses noted were sales, merchandising and promotion and design for mass media and consumer relations. Some of the courses, which these firms felt would best prepare these Harper graduates for their needs, were selling, merchandising display, retailing, accounting and working with textiles.

Major Conclusions

There seems to be a good supply of internships available as 22 firms are definitely interested and 12 more firms might be interested. Most of the demand for interns seems to favor part-time work for about 16 hours per week. The main training opportunities for interns seem to be sales, merchandising, stock work, fashion coordination and display.

Interns would also have a good opportunity to become employed upon graduation as 29 firms indicated there would be such a possibility. Most of the job opportunities which would be available center around managing, performing a variety of tasks and selling.

Those firms who have hired Harper graduates in the past seemed to have had good experiences as most plan to continue to hire Harper graduates in the future. These firms do list what they feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the program and what courses they would recommend are best suited for employment with them.

DETAILED RESULTS

Fashion Design Commercial Survey

Interest in using a student intern

Interest	Number	Percent
Yes	22	55
Not sure	6	15
Neeed more information	6	15
No	6	15
	40	100

Interest in more information on intern program

Interest	Number	Percent
Would like Harper to call	26	81.2
Would like Harper to write	2	6.3
No contact desired	4	12.5
	32	100.0

Preference for work schedule for student intern

Preference	Number	Percent	Sub-preference	Number	Percent
Work full-time for specific time period	7	20.6			
			Four weeks	1	14.3
			Six weeks	1	14.3
			Eight weeks	4	57.1
			Summer	1	14.3
Work part-time for specific number of hours per week	25	73.5			
			Eight hours	6.5	27
			Sixteen hour	10.5	42
			Twenty-two hours	5	20
			Not sure	3	12
Either full or part-time	2	5.9			
Total	34	100.0			

Type of training which would be available to intern students

Type of training	Number	Percent	Type of training	Number	Percent
Selling	31	91.2	Designing	1	2.9
Stock work	26	76.5	Tailoring	1	2.9
Merchandising	26	76.5	All speciality store operations	1	2.9
Fashion coordination	18	52.9	Accounting	1	2.9
Display	18	52.9	Buying	1	2.9
Unit control	13	38.2	Marking, cutting samples assemblying sales lines	1	2.9
Alteration	9	26.5	Merchandise and inventory control	1	2.9
Fashion illustration	6	17.7	All phases of tux rental business	1	2.9
Pattern making	3	8.8			
Personnel and schedvling duties	3	8.8			
Copy writing	2	5.9			
Grading	2	5.9			

Possibility for employment after graduation for intern

Possibility	Number	Percent
Yes	27	79.4
Possible	2	5.9
No	5	14.7
	34	100.0

Experience of Firms in Survey
with Regard to Employing Harper Graduates in Fashion Design

	Yes		No	
Experience	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Have ever had Harper students working for them	17	46.0	20	54.0
Have ever hired Harper students	14	45.2	17	54.8

Number of Harper graduates hired in past		Number	Percent
12		1	6.7
3		3	20.0
2		5	33.3
1		3	20.0
None		3	20.0
		15	100.0
Total hired	34		

Number of Harper graduates working for them		
3	2	13.3
1	5	33.3
None	8	53.4
	15	100.0
Total now employed 11		

Number of Harper graduates who have been promoted	Number	Percent
2	1	12.5
1	5	62.5
None	2	25.0
	8	100.0

Total promoted	7	
Percent promoted of total now employed	63.6	

Willingness to hire Harper graduates in future		
Yes Yes	8	80
As need arises	1	10
No - compnay too small to hire any more	1	10
	10	100

Person who would be working with the intern

Store manager - six answered
Mrs. Wood - manager
Robert Tseng, President
Debi Schmidgall - manager
Paulette Antila - manager
Manager - assistant manager - tailor
Edward Thorpe - president or shop manager
Experienced sales - ladies
Department manager - store manager
Store owner and store manager
Michael Kaplan - owner
Shirley Stenger - manager - buyer
Robin Curtis - manager
President of stores, assistant, supervisor, manager of store
President - buyer
Assistant manager or manager depending on particular store location and the qualifications of the student
Owner, buyer, trained sales person
Jeanne Sevey, owner
Buyer
Manager, assistant managers, junior assistants and trainees
General manager
Store manager, district manager and buyer
Manager, owner and buyer
Designer and designer's assistant
Management team
Department manager and store manager

Name and job title of person who would evaluate performance and potential of intern

Store manager, district manager
Mrs. Wood, manager
Alloah, manager
Robert Tseng, president
Debi Schmidgall, manager
Paulette Antila, manager
Norman Hallock, manager
Edward Thorpe, president
Dieter Laskowski, owner
Store manager, five answered
Bonnie Eadie, store owner
Michael Kaplan, owner
Shirley Stenger, manager, buyer
Robin Curtis, manager
Whoever would be in direct contact with student
Open
Assistant Manager or manager depending on particular store location
Rita Thoren or Bonnie Kaufmann, owners
Donald Sevey, president and Jeanne Sevey
S. Sreamburg, buyer and fashion coordinator
Sales manager and buyer
Jo. Schulze, manager
William E. Koch, general manager
Louise Linari and store manager
Owner/buyer
Marsha Andecle, designer
Linda Cohen, store manager

Capacity or position intern might be hired for after graduation

Assistant store manager
Selling and manager
Display, fashion coordination, alterations, fashion illustration, merchandising, stock work and selling
Designing, merchandising and selling
Sales, cashiers or management trainee
Pattern making, grading, display, alteration, tailoring, merchandising, stock work and selling
Sales, merchandising, etc.
Management
Not sure
Display, fashion coordination, alteration, merchandising, stock work and selling.
Manager trainee - The Suitery is a chain of men's clothing stores, always looking for potential management talent
Assistant manager, display, buyer
Open
Management trainee or assistant manager definitely. We have 18 stores in Chicago and openings occur quite often.
Sales
Fashion coordination, alterations, fashion illustration, merchandising and selling

(continued)

Management trainee
Small chains have little work division - all duties
Assistant designer
Sales or possible management, depending upon the need at the time and the qualifications of the intern.
Assistant department manager
Pattern and grading

Strengths of Harper Fashion Design graduates' training and education background as viewed by their employers

Originality, because of pattern making and designing
Display is the strength of the women we hired
Paperwork, dependable
Display, selling
Pattern making, cutting
Fabric, construction
Pattern making
Selling, dispaly

Weaknesses of Harper Fashion Design graduates' training and educational background as viewed by their employers

Sales, promotion minded, inventory concepts and consumer relations.
I am so pleased with the display talents of the lady we hired three years ago that we use her exclusively in that area so I cannot honestly evaluate weakness.
Selling, need more outgoing people
Ability to design for mass media, rather than themselves
Sales, merchandising

Courses which would best prepare Harper graduates for careers in employers firm as viewed by these employers

Merchandising management
Display and illustration
Some of above to give better relation to total outlook
The art of waiting on individual customers
Math is, I believe, the most important aspect of retailing field along with accounting.
Fashion co-ordination - window and interior display. Merchandising, selling and a psychology course.
Business courses, working with textiles and fabrics, selling
Fashion merchandising, marketing (retail emphasis), accounting, personnel management, display, communication related subjects (speech, English, etc.)
Salesmanship

Other comments and suggestions about Harper's intern program and Fashion Design program by employers of fashion designers

Let's talk
Very interesting program and may be beneficial to both parties.
Basically good program.
We are not familiar with it.
We have virtually no personnel turnover in our shop - at such time as we might need additional or replacement help, I would contact you people before anyone else. The woman we have here who graduated from you course study is a very talented individual who has refined her display techniques in the three years she has worked here. She is used primarily in that area and also in doing promotional shows.
We are not properly equipped to train an intern at this time. Thank you.
It would take a personal conversation to make the type of recommendations necessary.
There seems to be a lack of business courses in the programs you have described. This would prove to be a handicap to most management trainees in a company such as ours.
We are a small family owned business, a children's speciality shop. We can show any student a variety of things to do from buying to marketing.
I don't believe our business is the type you're looking for. It would mainly be sales and stocking, also marking merchandise here.
We are a very small establishment, therefore, the only phase of your school that would interest us is selling. We can spare none to help a student through a an internship since each one employed here works.
We have no use for someone in your program. Sorry we can't help you.
We may not fit your program from a design standpoint, but we do from a merchandising view and need is part-time employees to help us Thursday and Friday evenings and Saturdays. Possible some afternoons if their schedule permits.
We are very limited in size and lack the depth to be of much help in training. They should work in at least six to ten people stores.
On the job apprenticeship training is one of the most important parts of the design program, if the time period is long enough.
An internship program is one of the best and most reliable and tangible aids to a student. As a manager and a representative of Ups'N Downs I would look forward to being as much of an asset to anyone growing and developing interest in the field.

APPENDIX

William Rainey Harper College
Algonquin and Roselle Roads
Palatine, Illinois 60067
312-397-3000

Dear Prospective Employer:

The Fashion Design and Merchandising Department at William Rainey Harper College strives to realistically prepare our students for work in the fashion industry. In order to provide a practical work experience in conjunction with classroom studies, an internship program is part of required curriculum. A description of the Fashion Design and Internship program are enclosed along with a brochure

To enable us to make this an effective work/study program and at the same time, to gear the internship within the schedule and routine of the prospective business firm, we are enclosing a questionnaire for you to complete.

We at the College know what academic needs must be filled. What we are asking of you is, "What are the needs of the industry and how can our students most effectively participate within the confines of an internship or apprenticeship program?"

We appreciate your taking the time to answer the questions and add any comments or suggestions that will be helpful to us in achieving our mutual goals. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Chieko Nambu

Chieko Nambu
Coordinator
Fashion Design and
Merchandising

Enclosures

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Description of the Fashion Design and Internship Program

The Fashion Design Career Program of William Rainey Harper College was established in 1969 and has successfully produced not only designers and pattern makers but also managers and coordinators in various fashion-related fields.

Our career program is a two-year program. Student internships are scheduled in the fall semester before they are to graduate. At this time, they have already completed the courses outlined in our brochure for the first year of the program. We would like them to intern a minimum of six hours a week. A salary is not necessarily required. The internship should be a learning experience for the student and an opportunity for the employer to evaluate the ability of the Harper design and merchandise students. However, if a firm wishes to offer a minimum salary, the students would be obliged to accept.

The program gives students a broad exposure and a sound understanding of all the phases of fashion careers. For instance, in design areas students are trained to make patterns from scratch through the methods of draping and drafting. Their training covers from mere design ideas to the final show presentations. Annually, we give more than a dozen shows to the public.

FASHION DESIGN COMMERCIAL SURVEY

The Internship program is an integral part of the Fashion Design two year program. Please answer the following questions regarding your potential interest in the program.

1. Would you like to use a student for an intern?

_____ A. Yes
_____ B. No
_____ C. Not sure
_____ D. Need more information first

2. Which is your preference?

_____ A. Full-time for a specific time period:
____ 4 weeks
____ 6 weeks
____ 8 weeks

_____ B. Part-time for a specific number of hours per week:
____ 8 hours
____ 16 hours
____ 20-24 hours

3. What type of training would be available to the intern students? Please describe briefly.

_____ A. Pattern Making
_____ B. Grading
_____ C. Designing
_____ D. Display
_____ E. Fashion Coordination
_____ F. Alteration
_____ G. Tailoring
_____ H. Custom Designing
_____ I. Textile Design
_____ J. Fashion Illustration
_____ K. Merchandising
_____ L. Stock Work
_____ M. Unit Control
_____ N. Selling
_____ O. Copywriting
_____ P. Other (please describe)

_____

_____

4. Who would be working with the intern? (Please specify title and position.)

_____

5. Who would evaluate the performance and potential of the intern?

Name and job title _____

_____

6. Would you like us to call you?

_____ A. Yes
_____ B. No

7. Would you be interested in a visit to our campus? (Specify date interested.)

_____

8. Would there be a possibility for employment after graduation?

_____ A. Yes
_____ B. No

If yes, in what capacity or position? _____

9. Experience of Harper graduates at your firm.

A. Have you ever had Harper students work for you? _____ Yes _____ No
B. Have you ever hired Harper students? _____ Yes _____ No
C. How many Harper graduates have you hired? _____
D. How many Harper graduates are working for you now? _____
E. How many Harper graduates have been promoted? _____
F. Will you continue to hire Harper graduates? _____ Yes _____ No
If the answer is "no", please explain.

_____

10. Curriculum evaluation - if you have employed Harper Fashion Design graduates, evaluate their training and educational background which they brought to you.

A. In what areas have they been strong?

_____

_____

B. In what areas have they been weak?

_____

_____

C. What courses would you recommend that would best prepare our students for work in your firm?

_____

_____

11. Comments and suggestions about the internship program or about the Fashion Design program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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